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GIANT CEDARS NATURE TRAIL KOOTENAI National Forest

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CATALOGING PREP.



SELF-GUIDED WALK

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service / Northern Region



This easy, 30-minute walk (0.9 of a mile) takes you through a cool, shady, and quiet forest plant community. Gigantic ancient western red cedar trees dominate the 100-acre Ross Creek Scenic Area in the Kootenai National Forest.

Numbers in the left-hand margin correspond to the numbered posts you will find along the Giant Cedars Nature Trail.

Do Not Pick or Remove Plants

Please leave the plants for others to enjoy. If each visitor picked only one flower along this nature trail, the results would be devastating. Picking of flowers or removal of shrubs and plants is prohibited.



WESTERN HEMLOCK— is abundant in areas of moist porous soils. Needles of this evergreen are flat, whitish on the underside and are shorter than the needles of the fir and spruce. Young hemlocks will be easily recognized by their drooping tops. At maturity the western hemlock is a hardy tree. But when overmature, the tree is highly susceptible to wood-decaying organisms.



A ROCKSLIDE— formed by weathering and plant action on the cliff above. It offers a study in plant succession. Note the gray patches of lichens (pronounced “like-ens”) on the rocks. Lichens are the first chapter in the story of plant succession. Being part algae and part fungi, lichens take their nourishment from the air. By chemical action they slowly break down a thin layer of rock surface. Lichen bodies accumulate to enrich this thin mantle of “soil,” thus giving mosses a foothold on the rocks. Mosses produce humus and more soil for higher forms of plant life. A few ferns and small flowering plants have started among the rocks. Along the edges of the rockslide you will notice

that shrubs and trees have gained a foothold in the available soil. Roots of the larger plants seek out cracks in the boulders. By slow steady growth, the plants gradually enlarge the crevices, which in turn speeds the decomposition of the rock mass.



GRAND FIR — a tree of minor commercial importance in this area. The species has usually long pendulous branches, sweeping out in graceful curves. Lustrous flattened needles have a dark, yellow-green upper surface in contrast to the silvery-faced underside.



DUFF — the accumulation of leaves, twigs, and decaying wood that forms a loose cover of most forest floors. This is an intermediate stage in the return of organic material to the soil. Duff serves as a soil mulch, protecting the roots of plants from heat and cold. It also absorbs and retains moisture against possible drought. When the weather is dry, the duff becomes a hazard; fires easily start in this tinder-like material. A cigarette or match — carelessly dropped in dry duff — may smolder for hours or even days before breaking into flame. This is one reason we ask you to NOT smoke along this nature trail. *Please be careful with your smokes — don't be a flipper!*



ENGLEMANN SPRUCE — the tree twenty feet upstream. Note the thin scaly bark. Spruce needles are square in cross section and the points are sharp. Striking a spruce branch smartly with the back of the hand is almost like slapping an equal number of stickpins. Note the gray lichens hanging from the dead lower limbs.



WATER — flowing here originates in nearby springs. In the autumn, their flow tapers to

a trickle. Note the water-loving plants. Lace flowers — with dainty small white blossoms and maple-like leaves — are common here.



WESTERN WHITE PINE — is an important timber species in the Kootenai National Forest. Note the smooth grayish-purple bark of the young pine. The bark on old trees is broken into small square blocks separated by deep cracks. Needles grow in bundles of five on the western white pine.

White pine pole blight kills pole-size trees between 40 and 100 years of age; it has killed many young white pine in this canyon.



DEAD CEDAR — mute evidence of past forest fires in this area. Lightning, a common cause of fire in the mountain West, probably started this fire. The decayed hollow center acted as a flue and burned out the tree. Note the vigorous young trees replacing the old. You will see other fire-killed trees in this scenic area.



"THE WRESTLERS" — would be an appropriate title for these two trees literally fighting for sunlight and soil nutrients. Which will eventually win the battle — the white pine or the cedar?

Considering the scenic area as a whole, hemlock and cedar will eventually become the prevailing tree species here because of their abilities to endure the shade of mature trees for many years.



A FALLEN GIANT — shows the hollow center common in old-growth cedar. Heart rot, a decaying of the heartwood, is caused by various fungi. Heartwood of practically every cedar in this locality becomes infected before the tree reaches maturity. Note the spreading support base of the tree and the shallow root system.



A FAIRY DEN — was carved from this old monarch (dead tree, 40 feet ahead) by fire and heart rot. While you could keep dry in

A handwritten signature in dark ink, possibly reading 'A. J. ...'.

this den during a rainstorm, this type shelter is not recommended during lightning or wind storms.



ANNUAL GROWTH RINGS — exposed by saw cuts through this downed giant, show that growth during the latter part of this tree's life was very slow. This is shown by the close spacing of the rings. Because of the heart rot, it is not possible to tell the exact age of these giant cedars.



CATHEDRAL GROVE — these trees are a good example of the ultimate or climax vegetation for this area. Unless nature's balance is upset by fire or man, these giant cedars will dominate the area.



WESTERN RED CEDAR — can be identified by its flat, fern-like foliage, composed of small, overlapping, scale-like needles and its stringy, fibrous bark. The largest trees in this scenic area are western red cedar. Some red cedar in this grove are now 12 feet in diameter and 175 feet in height. The largest tree is estimated to be over 500 years old. Older trees in the vicinity probably began growing before Columbus set sail for the New World.



DEVIL'S CLUB — is a showy plant. It often forms thickets along streams. Because of its sharp-spined stems, devil's club can be a formidable barrier. Plants are usually three to four feet high, topped with large spiny, maple-like leaves. The small bright red berries form a large club-like cluster above the leaves in the center of the plant. These berries are not edible.



FERNS — form an interesting and showy part of the forest community's understory. The oak-fern with its slender, dark-colored stems is common here. Lady fern is abundant and flashy, growing from one to four feet high with many leaves forming a dense cluster. Note the forest's life cycle, evidenced in new

trees receiving nutrients through decomposition of the old trees.



A BURL — the large, warty lump growing on this tree and others along the trail. It may be caused by malformed bud growth, wounds, or mistletoe. Abnormal growth is somewhat comparable to a tumor. Large burls, especially those from hardwoods, produce a beautiful grain highly prized for veneers and cabinet work.



FLYING SQUIRRELS — make their home in this old snag (35 feet ahead). Claw marks, beneath the old woodpecker holes, indicate where the squirrels landed after soaring home from nearby trees.



MOUNTAIN MAPLE— is the most common shrub in the scenic area. It varies in height from large bushes three to six feet tall to slender trees 20 feet high, with smooth, gray-brown bark. The leaves are easily recognized because of their striking resemblance to other maples. Autumn turns the foliage bright red or yellow.



THE TWINS— these red cedars began growth as one tree. At a certain height, damage to the terminal bud caused two lateral buds to develop. Each continued growing as a separate trunk. As they grew in height, the weight of the leaning boles (trunks) caused a split in the main trunk. There are several twin trees along the trail.

IS IN YOUR HANDS

A FOREST'S FUTURE



COMMON AND SCIENTIFIC NAMES

TREES

Western Red Cedar	<i>Thuja plicata</i>
Grand Fir	<i>Abies grandis</i>
Western Hemlock	<i>Tsuga heterophylla</i>
Western White Pine	<i>Pinus monticola</i>
Engelmann Spruce	<i>Picea engelmannii</i>

SHRUBS

Mountain Maple	<i>Acer glabrum</i>
Pacific Yew	<i>Taxus brevifolia</i>

SMALL PLANTS

American Devil's Club	<i>Oplopanax horridus</i>
Lady Fern	<i>Athyrium filixfoemina</i>
Oak Fern	<i>Dryopteris disjuncta</i>
Lace Flower	<i>Tiarella unifoliata</i>

For the enjoyment and appreciation of future generations, please help us to preserve your Ross Creek Scenic Area. Allow plants to remain as you see them. Keep this nature trail clean.





Ross Creek Scenic Area was established December 2, 1960, by Northern Regional Forester Charles L. Tebbe (under authority of Regulation U-3 of the Secretary of Agriculture) to protect and preserve this virgin stand of giant cedars. This scenic 100-acre plot is closed to logging and mineral entry. The Forest Service manages and protects this Scenic Area for its scientific and recreational values. More than 10,000 people visit the area each year.

Please Follow Smokey's ABC's



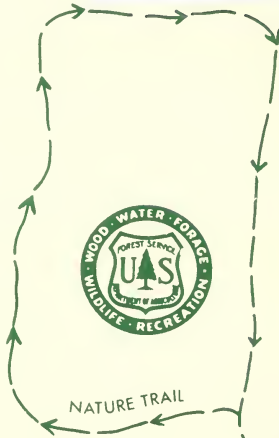
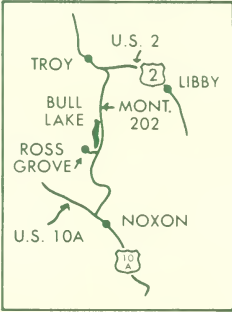
GIANT CEDARS

NATURE TRAIL ROSS CREEK SCENIC AREA

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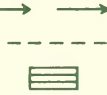


NATURE TRAIL

NATURE TRAIL

FOOT PATH

PICNIC TABLE



PICNIC AREA

PARKING AREA

RESTROOMS

STATE HIGHWAY 202 (4 MILES)